United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1158
9 June 1992

TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council unanimously authorizes the Secretary-Ceneral to deploy military observers and others to Sarajevo "when he judges it appropriate", as a first step to create the necessary conditions for unimpeded delivery of humanitarian supplies to that city and other destinations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

+ Refugee crisis in Yugoslavia and surrounding region "is deepening by the day", according to joint report by UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO.

+ Secretary-General returns to Rio de Janeiro to continue taking part in United Nations Environment and Development Conference.

+ Study of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates deforestation at 16,9 million hectares a year.

* * *

The Security Council last night authorized the Secretary-General to deploy military observers and related personnel and equipment to Sarajevo "when he judges it appropriate", to supervise the withdrawal of anti-aircraft weapons and the concentration of heavy weapons at agreed locations in the city

The Council took that action by adopting unanimously resolution 758 (1992), in which it decided to enlarge the mandate and strength of the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) in order to create the necessary conditions for unimpeded delivery of humanitarian supplies to Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It also demanded that all parties cooperate fully with UNPROFOR and international humanitarian agencies in that effort and take steps to ensure their safety.

The Council thus approved a recommendation of the Secretary-General for a four-phase programme designed to secure Sarajevo for humanitarian deliveries. The deployment of military observers approved yesterday would constitue the first part of the plan. In the remaining phases, a 1,000-member infantry

(more)

For information media—not an official record

battalion would be deployed to ensure the immediate security of the airport; civilian personnel required to operate the airport would be deployed; and the airport would be opened for humanitarian and official flights.

The Council requested that the Secretary-General seek its authorization for the deployment of the remaining elements of UNPROFOR, after he has reported that all the conditions necessary for them to carry out its enlarged mandate, including "an effective and durable cease-fire", have been fulfilled.

By the resolution, the Council also strongly condemned all those parties responsible for violating the cease-fire which was reaffirmed in a 5 June agreement, and asked the Secretary-General to report back in no later than seven days on progress in achieving an effective and durable cease-fire in the region.

* * *

The refugee crisis in Eastern Europe is "deepening by the day", as the conflict in what was Yugoslavia drives hundreds of thousands of people from their homes, according to an emergency report issued jointly by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO). More than 75 per cent of those fleeing are women and children.

The report states that while negotiators struggle to sustain a ceasefire long enough to restore the provision of humanitarian assistance through Sarajevo airport, food shortages and fear of the spreading conflagration are forcing families to migrate even from those areas not yet affected by the violence.

It says that in the past 12 months some 1.5 million people in the former Yugoslavia have fled from their homes, with nearly 250,000 seeking temporary refuge in neighbouring countries. Over 500,000 fled from the fighting in Croatia, and in the past two months alone 720,000 have sought to escape the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

With an impasse on the return of the displaced, the report says, "the number of victims grows while the ability of the host communities to look after them steadily declines".

A joint appeal by UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO issued on 22 May for $174 million by May 30, had drawn pledges totalling only $32 million. Faced with mounting violence, UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) temporarily suspended deliveries into Bosnia and Herzegovina in late May. But efforts to assist those in the beleaguered areas continue, together with collaborative programmes to provide shelter, food, health care and social services for the growing number of refugees in the surrounding region.

* * *

(more)

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali returned to Rio de Janeiro from Uruguay last night. He was scheduled to meet at noon today with Captain Jacques Cousteau of the Cousteau Society.

Yesterday, during a stopover of his plane in Buenos Aires, the Secretary-General had had a telephone conversation with the President of Argentina, Carlos Saul Menem.

On his arrival at Rio de Janeiro's Galeao international airport, the Secretary-General met briefly with the President of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrossian, and the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Belarus, Stanislav S. Shushkevich.

* * *

Deforestation of tropical forests stands at 16.9 million hectares a year, with the situation particularly serious in the humid zones of Central and South America, continental southeast Asia and West Africa, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) announced today at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

The current deforestation rate shows a 50 per cent jump since 1980, when it was reported at 11.3 million hectares, FAO said.

According to the Agency, about 70 per cent of total deforestation takes place in tropical rainforests and moist forest zones. As for the dry zones, deforestation and woodland degradation remain acute in the Sudano-Sahelian zone of Africa.

The FAO announced its figures after a study based not only on geographical areas but also on ecological zones. The analysis found that deforestation in the humid lowlands was highest in Latin America and the Caribbean, while in Africa deforestation affected, to a large extent, the dry tropical zones.

In addition to deforestation, caused mainly by agricultural development, millions of hectares are degraded as a result of timber logging in some humid tropical areas or over-exploitation for fuelwood and grazing in the dry tropics.

* *** *